

misguided because the young people don't "realize how their self-image is debilitated when they use this awful word in public."

THE N-WORD AND BLACK HISTORY—WHY IT SHOULD BE BANNED

(By Tony Best)

Julius Caesar, Gnaeus Pompey and Marcus Crassus used it liberally in Rome, Britain Gaul, the Balkans and Greece.

Whether as a writer, military general or orator, Caesar used the Latin word "Niger" liberally in his historical accounts of the Gallic Wars, conquests of Britain or in reports on the Senate in Rome. And when he spoke or wrote it around 50 BC he was describing a color, as in a piece of armor, house, chariot or a horse.

But somehow "Niger" that meant Black in English became "Negars" in Jamestown in the United States in 1619 to describe with contempt a shipload of African captives who were put into a state of bondage in the U.S.

Although scholars are divided over why John Rolfe, a Jamestown colonist, recorded "Negars" in his diary to describe the Blacks, whether he wanted to be verbally abusive or was simply describing Black people, what has happened since then is that the pejorative term which eventually became "Niggers" has taken on a long-lasting life of its own. This highly offensive word or some form of it has found its way into literature—Amos Zu Bolton II's "Niggered Amen" and Carl Van Vechten's "Nigger Heaven" are two examples—in comedy routines by Blacks and in the lyrics of rap music in the late 20th and early 21st century.

At the urging of New York City Council member Leroy Comrie of Queens, the legislative body at City Hall is this week considering a resolution that calls for a moratorium on the use of the N-word in our City. While opinion is split over what action the Council should take, it's clear that the use of the word is offensive to most right-thinking Blacks and should be expunged from our vocabulary.

Yes, some Blacks, especially rappers, may wish to defend the use of "Niggas" or "Niggaz" on First Amendment grounds of free speech or as a term of endearment among Blacks to describe each other; what's not in dispute is that the term is meant to be degrading.

Andrea C. McElroy, a Black member of the Irvington Council in New Jersey, which placed a symbolic ban on the word's use there, put it well when she said that Black adults and society as a whole should give the youth a history lesson. We may be at the end of Black History Month in 2006, but learning is a continuous process.

"There is a swelling population of Black youth that use this word as if it is a term of endearment," she said. "And I think it is basically incumbent upon us to remind them of what that word meant to so many of our ancestors. This is something we probably should have done years ago."

Yes, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which guarantees free speech prevents the legalized banning of the word but there can be nothing wrong with sending a message to young people and others, whether comedians, reporters, novelists or historians, that the N-word was meant to degrade Black people, not to praise them.

Austin "Tom" Clarke, one of Canada's most celebrated novelists, whose latest work, "The Polished Hoe," captured the Giller Prize, Canada's equivalent of the Pulitzer, had an important reminder for the lawmakers at City Hall.

"It doesn't matter if it is used in Black circles and societies as a term of endearment," said the West Indian. "Historically its usage

has been offensive. One may attempt to argue that when it is used by Blacks to define or address themselves, the bad meaning of the word is softened. But the fact is that its usage is either seen or heard by white people who might themselves feel that what is good for the goose is good for the gander. That was exemplified with very negative effect recently by a white comedian in America (Michael Richards, who played Kramer on Seinfeld) and who thought he was being heckled by an aspect of his audience, used the word to ridicule his audience. His demonstration and use of the word in a public place might very well be reflective of his thoughts and feelings." Interestingly Richards declined to attend the Council meeting when invited to do so. Although he later apologized, the vehemence of his original mouthing told a story about vindictiveness which his anger brought into the open.

Richards isn't alone. Time and again, whites in particular resort to the N-word whether in literature, on the stage or the screen to suggest superiority over Blacks and to hint at violence to force them into submission.

The historical connection with violence and the N-word isn't simply 400 years old. Lynchings were commonplace in the 20th century and the N-word was often the rallying cry of racists to justify their lethal actions.

While it's true that Richards didn't commit violence as he uttered the two syllables, it's not difficult to see him being driven by rage and contempt for Blacks in the audience by turning to violence.

On Long Island, that's what a white middle class mother of three children apparently did when her children's West Indian nanny didn't feed the family dog on time in 2005. She subsequently pleaded guilty to assaulting the Black woman by pushing her down some steps, injuring her leg and then throwing her clothes on the lawn, all while calling her a N ...

Apparently, she had waited three years to call her that. Thankfully, that incident is now the subject of a federal civil rights civil case seeking damages.

Contrary to what some misguided Blacks and whites would wish us to believe, the N-word can't be transformed into anything beautiful.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 15, 2007

Mrs. DeLAURO. Madam Speaker, due to a death in the family, I missed a series of suspension votes, the vote on Water Quality Investment Act and the Living Kidney Organ Donation Act.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall number 121, "yea" on rollcall number 122, "No" on rollcall number 123, "Aye" on rollcall number 124, "yea" on rollcall number 125, and "yea" rollcall number 126.

FREEDOM FOR JOSÉ ANTONIO MOLA PORRO

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 15, 2007

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of FLORIDA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about

Jose Antonio Mola Porro, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Mola Porro is a member of the Cuban Foundation for Human Rights and director of the Pedro Luis Boitel Independent Library, in a country oppressed by a regime that mandates official propaganda and prohibits truthful news. Due to his commitment to democracy and human rights, he has been repeatedly harassed and incarcerated.

In May 2005, while on his way to a meeting of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba, Mr. Mola Porro was arrested and condemned to two agonizing years in one of the dictator's hellish totalitarian gulags for being a "pre-criminal danger to society". On February 28, 2006, Mr. Mola Porro was "conditionally" released after serving ten months of his "sentence". Never wavering in his commitment to freedom for the Cuban people, upon his release he again devoted his energies to depicting the true, tragic, reality of totalitarian Cuba.

During the early morning hours of November 17, 2006, approximately a dozen of the regime's state security thugs rearrested Mr. Mola Porro and again forced him to survive against all odds in an infernal dungeon. Following his arrest, the dictator's henchmen broke into Mr. Mola Porro's home, savagely wreaking havoc on what little belongings he had. When they finished, over one hundred books and magazines, along with many of his personal belongings, had been stolen.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Mola Porro suffers in grotesque conditions at the whim of a tyrant because of his steadfast belief that the Cuban people do not deserve to live condemned to oppression and under constant threat of unprovoked torture, abuse and arbitrary arrest. A condition that has fated, according to the U.S. Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices—2006, thousands of Cuban citizens to serve sentences for "dangerousness" in the absence of any criminal activity.

Mr. Mola Porro is a symbol of bravery in the face of a murdering tyrant's oppression. He is unrelenting in his fight for freedom for the Cuban people. It is a crime of the highest order that people, just 90 miles from our shore, who dream of and work for freedom, are imprisoned in these nightmarish conditions.

Madam Speaker, despite the constant harassment, the example of Mr. Mola Porro is proof that the Cuban people have leaders who are unafraid to demonstrate their thirst for democracy and freedom. My Colleagues, we must demand the immediate release of Jose Antonio Mola Porro and every prisoner of conscience in totalitarian Cuba.

H.R. 1362, ACCOUNTABILITY IN CONTRACTING ACT VOTE 155: ON THE MOTION TO RECOMMIT WITH INSTRUCTIONS

HON. JOHN J. HALL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 15, 2007

Mr. HALL of New York. Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the amending text contained in the motion to recommit was not fully debated or its full ramifications considered prior to the vote, and I cast my vote on the limited information available. As a result, my vote was informed by my concern over the current state